Never Take My Heart

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by WordsAblaze

Summary

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>
> Will struggles again, trying to utilise his knees and elbows, but each movement sends ripples of heat and fog through his bones until he’s gasping for breath, the room swimming around him. Bizarrely, when he does manage to avoid throwing up and his gaze meets Hannibal’s once more, he finds concern directed his way, as if Hannibal isn’t the one about to be branded by a lunatic.

Notes

> mason verger, if nothing else, provides great angst potential,,,
>
> day 6 prompts used: made to watch

See the end of the work for more notes

Will wakes with the taste of blood in his mouth.

Cordell's blood, his mind supplies. It doesn't take long to fill in the gaps from there, from a bone saw and menacing dining room table to hanging upside down and another, more menacing dining room table.

"Verger," he realises, his eyes then flying open in alarm. "Hannibal?"

"Which one is it you want?" Cordell asks, at which point it dawns on Will that said lackey has his arms coiled around him, with Will's back trapped against his chest. Instinctively, Will throws his head back as hard as he can, but the motion is aborted by the intense wave of dizziness that immediately comes over him. Drugged, *again* .

He groans in discomfort, and Cordell chuckles behind him. "No second chances."

"None indeed," Mason Verger himself confirms, rolling into view. Will blinks back the spots clouding his vision and forces himself to focus on Mason.

"Did you… did you *drug* us?" Will asks, frowning.

Mason doesn't reply, but he does manoeuvre his wheelchair to the left, and Will's stomach drops. He knows, realistically, that Cordell's arms around him haven't tightened, but he can't help but feel as though his lungs have been squeezed further, breathing becoming impossible for several long moments as he takes in the sight of Hannibal.

Hannibal, on his knees, in a pig pen. Hannibal, with his arms pulled above his head and attached to the ceiling by rope. Hannibal, devoid of clothes, staring at him with something akin to the foreign concept of discomfort in his eyes.

"Hannibal," he manages, straining in Cordell's grip. But whatever drugs are in his—and only his—system have clearly affected his muscles, because he can do little more than wriggle. Frustrated, he turns his gaze back to Mason. "Stop this insanity."

Silently making his way back in front of Will, Mason reaches up and roughly grabs his jaw. "If this is insanity, it's insanity of your own doing," he says simply, and the worst part is that he's not even wrong. His grip tightens on Will's jaw until it becomes almost unbearable, but Will doesn't give him the satisfaction of wincing, instead waiting until Cordell clears his throat pointedly. "You're right," Mason agrees, and drops his hand dismissively.

Will looks back over to Hannibal, who seems ostensibly unfazed by the whole situation. But Will can see the way his hands are curled into fists and his jaw is clenched and his shoulders are held stiffly, all subtle tells of his frustration. He doesn't get a chance to comment on any of them, though, because someone else walks into the room with nothing less than a *brand* .

"No," Will protests immediately. "No, no, Mason, you can't—"

"Actually, I think you'll find I *can* and I *will* ," Mason interrupts gleefully, and his eyes seem to glow brighter than the metal heading towards Hannibal.

Will struggles again, trying to utilise his knees and elbows, but each movement sends ripples of heat and fog through his bones until he's gasping for breath, the room swimming around him. Bizarrely, when he does manage to avoid throwing up and his gaze meets Hannibal's once more, he finds concern directed *his* way, as if Hannibal isn't the one about to be *branded* by a lunatic.

The man with the brand has reached his position behind Hannibal now, and Will knows the psychiatrist must be able to feel the heat radiating off the metal rod, but he remains still, his eyes locked on Will. And Will, unable to do anything else with the throbbing of his head and the screaming of his lungs, holds his gaze.

"I'm sorry," he whispers inaudibly.

He watches as Hannibal's eyes widen almost imperceptibly, as his limbs tense when the metal is pressed down harder, as his nostrils flare when the scent of burned skin fills the air. He watches as Mason's laugh echoes beside him, as Cordell reminds him how this is his fault, as the man with the brand hums in satisfaction. He watches as he strains against his human cage, as his vision becomes blurry with tears of frustration, as his helplessness solidifies into a cold rage inside him.

He grits his teeth to silence that rage before it can be used against them, and notices the exact moment Hannibal tilts his head to the right, catalogues the sudden clarity of his gaze, and *smiles* . The others notice that too, and Mason has at least enough common sense to look disturbed by the act, glancing between Will and Hannibal with a scowl on his face. "What have I missed?"

Met with lengthy silence, Mason all but growls. "This stubborn behaviour will get you nowhere. Cordell, let's reverse the stakes, shall we?"

Hannibal seems to figure Mason's motives out before Will, judging by the way he inexplicably chooses to begin struggling in his restraints. Not that it takes long for Will to catch up, because he'd have to be a fool not to realise why Cordell suddenly shifts position so one of his arms is curled all the way around Will's front, the other sneaking up so he can clamp a hand over Will's nose and mouth.

Will's eyes widen as he cries out, the sound muffled by Cordell's hand. He thrashes, but his head is restricted by Cordell's grip, and the rest of his limbs are too weak to do any damage. He tries not to lose Hannibal's gaze, something in him seeking that comfort despite everything, but his head is slowly pulled further back against Cordell's shoulder and he finds himself staring desperately at the ceiling, his fingers jerking against his sides as the world collapses around him.

"Leave him!"

And, mercifully, Cordell *does* .

Will is coughing and gasping moments later, his breaths fast and shallow as he heaves in air, blinking rapidly to dispel the darkness that had been steadily creeping in. He can feel his

head pounding, ready to tear right through his skin, each of his ribs digging painfully outwards to try and keep him alive.

He doesn't realise just how much his vision had been wobbling until it stops doing so and Hannibal comes back into focus, this time with something dark and desperate in his eyes. "Just breathe, Will."

He wants to scoff and comment that *of course* he's breathing now that nothing is blocking his airways, but clearly said airways haven't yet been nourished enough to allow him to speak, his voice all but a croak when he tries to reply, so he just nods, squeezing his eyes shut and counting the seconds to equalise his inhales and exhales. .

"Feeling co-operative yet?" Mason asks, the question clearly not directed to him. Will tunes out the following conversation, slumping in his cage of arms and trying in vain to swallow down his frustration.

When he tunes back in, he immediately wishes he hadn't; Cordell's hands are back on his face. He tries to shout, to shake the rough fingers away from himself, to do *anything* but remain pliant and dizzy and *useless* . But he can't do any of those things, his body betraying him, and he must have been held long enough to black out this time because he wakes on the floor, the cold of earth seeping up through the back of his shirt.

"Will?"

He only groans in response. There's pain *everywhere* and he can't understand why. He hadn't been the one branded, he doesn't understand why he would be in pain, in *so much* pain.

"Will, please, you must sit up."

He doesn't want to. He really, really doesn't want to. But he tries anyway. He rolls over onto his side, taking a moment to catch his breath when the action unexpectedly steals the air from his exhausted lungs before pulling his arms into place under himself. He forces his body upwards, biting the inside of his cheek as he finally makes it to his knees, tasting blood once the ringing in his ears fades away.

"That's it. Just a little further, Will."

"I can't," he pleads, though he's not even sure what he's trying to accomplish by following these instructions.

"You can."

He shakes his head, groaning when nausea fills his throat. "I really can't."

"Look at me."

Will's head moves of its own accord, and his breath hitches when he catches sight of Hannibal, who, because of Will's recent acquaintance with the floor, is now all but looming over him. "Hannibal…" he rasps, instinctively moving towards him and wincing when his entire body protests at having moved too quickly, too soon. "S—sorry."

“No, no, dear Will, I don’t need your apologies. I never have. Breathe for me.”

Will does, and is only mildly annoyed when that actually helps, “What, uh… what happened?” he asks softly.

Hannibal’s gaze sharpens like a knife. “I thought… I thought, for a moment, that they had gone too far. Held you for too long. Long enough to…”

Unable to bear the sharpness of emotion in Hannibal’s eyes, Will licks his lips, spits out the blood from having bitten through his cheek, and groans himself upright. He crashes back down to his knees immediately, and it hurts more than he cares to admit, but at least he’d landed closer to the pigpen, to Hannibal.

“Easy, Will,” Hannibal chides, but not unkindly.

Will shakes his head. “No time. Need to—to treat the brand. Quickly.” He hates the way his words are choppy and childish, whichever drugs Mason had administered clearly still in his system, but, to his surprise, Hannibal *laughs*.

“You’re worried about *my* condition?” he asks, and Will bristles at the incredulity in his tone.

“Yes?” he replies, wondering if he’d just hallucinated the branding. But he hasn’t had encephalitis for years now, and there’s no reason to suspect his mind is playing tricks on him.

Hannibal clicks his tongue. “Oh, Will. Whatever is to be done about your self-preservation skills?”

Forcing himself back to his feet in lieu of a reply, Will swallows heavily and stumbles forwards, managing to reach the gate of Hannibal’s pigpen before his knees give out again, sending him tumbling for the second time. He grunts as his head bounces off the floor, pain ricocheting through each crevice of his brain, and it takes Hannibal whisper-yelling to rouse him.

“Sorry,” he mutters when the world stabilises. “Trying.”

“I know, Will, I know,” Hannibal murmurs, and he sounds almost *guilty* . “But you must reach just a little further. I need only one hand free.”

Will is abruptly thrown into the memory of a police van, of dangling handcuffs, of broken bones and borrowed bravery. He borrows that same bravery—he’s sure Hannibal had reminded him of these semantics on purpose—to grab the little wooden gate and haul himself to his knees, resting his forehead against the metal lock before sliding it open, unceremoniously crawling forwards until he can reach out and actually, physically *touch* Hannibal.

Hannibal’s breath catches when he does, and Will uses the small noise as fuel, pulling one knee up and then the other, ignoring the way the world swirls at the edges as he reaches up and deftly unties the knot around Hannibal’s right hand. Later, he won’t remember how he’d managed to utilise fine motor skills when his mind had felt like it was crumbling inwards, but

he will remember the way Hannibal smiled up at him when he did, nothing but pride in his bright, bloodstained eyes.

Everything after that moment, that quiet moment of appreciation, is blurry. Will recalls nothing of the ensuing carnage and is all but dead to the world the moment he crashes at Hannibal's feet, brought back to life hours and hours later in his own bed, somehow.

"Hannibal," he mumbles, using the name as an anchor to consciousness.

"Will," his anchor responds, a hand slipping into his own, fingers intertwining.

"I'm sorry," he adds as he dares to open his eyes.

Hannibal shakes his head, squeezing his hand ever so gently. "We are here because you wouldn't go down without a fight, my dear Will."

Will chuckles, and both of them ignore how rough and jagged the sound is. "I went down. Several times."

"True," Hannibal concedes, "but you refused to stay down."

"You told me not to," Will explains, because, at the end of the day, it really is that simple. "I couldn't deny you."

There's a moment of tense silence in which Will fears he's said the wrong thing, but, when he looks up from their joined hands, he finds Hannibal staring at him in awe. "And nor can I, you."

His resolve fizzling to nought at the confession—such a statement is nothing less coming from Hannibal—and promptly making a decision he's almost certain will enrage the entire FBI but finding that he doesn't particularly care anymore, Will leans up to close the distance between them and, gently but with certainty, presses their lips together.

figured it was about time in this series they get to kiss, as a treat :)

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